KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY THE MOST HONOURABLE

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GOVERNOR-GENERAL

ON

"CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT"

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Introduction

I welcome this opportunity to participate in this event marking the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of Africana Studies at SUNY Albany. It is for me a great privilege and I am honoured to be here delivering the distinguished lecture marking the beginning of this year's celebration.

To understand fully why I consider this event timely and significant, I will share with you the perspective from which I will address you. I am a Jamaican by birth and nationality, a Caribbean person by choice, commitment and past institutional affiliation, an African-American by previous domicile, work experience, an African scholar by training and professional affiliation.

It is from this perspective that I offer my sincere congratulations to the Africana Studies Department and the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Department for maintaining their focus and direction over these many years. SUNY Albany must also be commended for the message it is sending that after forty years, it continues to be committed to the vision that inspired the establishment of that department, even though the conditions may have changed radically.
Today, given the relevance of, and indeed the inescapable need for, Africana Studies, we would again have to establish such a department. How fortunate we are that this department at SUNY Albany can take pride in its contribution and its seminal influence on the lives and careers of the hundreds of graduates who now populate positions of trust and influence here and around the world. I am further encouraged and delighted to see so many of my former colleagues who have played such a central role in the development of this branch of study.

I have decided to address the topic ‘Caribbean Development in a Changing Global Environment’ since I have devoted much time and energy over the past two decades or more in exploring this subject which I believe could serve to illustrate an aspect of the dynamics of contemporary international relations.
Globalization

The literature on Globalization is extensive and in some respects controversial. For purposes of this presentation it is enough to identify some of the main characteristics as they affect the current state of the economic order. There is a consensus that "the multidimensional process of globalization is rapidly transforming, in profound ways, all aspects of national and global activities and interactions. The pace, character and extent of the economic, social and political dimensions of globalization may vary across sectors and local circumstances, but its economic thrust is the erosion or elimination of national barriers to the international flow of goods, services, capital, finance and information." (Bernal – Globalization: The EPA and Economic Development)\(^1\). It is further agreed that national markets have been morphed into global markets because their operations are subsumed by global factors. "Every business, whether producing for the national or the world market, must become globally competitive, either to be able to export or to withstand competition from imports. The competition is no longer local, it is global in fact, and competition knows no boundaries\(^2\).

Within this general framework, there is exponential growth of services within the world economy, increased international competition, and rapid and profound technological change and innovations. From the perspective of developing countries two of the most significant consequences are the policy changes and the
ideological underpinnings that shape those policies. It is noticeable that there is a pronounced decline in empathy for the plight of developing countries. This decline is manifested in several aspects of the interaction between developed and developing countries, most notably the dismantling of preferential trade agreements, the reduction of development assistance in real terms and the forced graduation of middle income developing countries from eligibility for lending on concessional terms, grants and certain trade concessions such as the generalised system of preferences.

Characteristics of Caribbean Economies

Globalization and its policy prescriptions have posed unprecedented challenges to countries in the Caribbean and have fundamentally changed the environment in which Caribbean development has been proceeding for much of the latter part of the twentieth century. Caribbean economies are characterised by a high degree of openness, limited diversity in economic activity, export concentration on one to three products, significant dependence on trade taxes and small-size firms. The result is that these economies exhibit acute vulnerability to external economic events.
Moreover, during the last decade most of these economies have experienced low or declining economic growth. In addition, given their small size, the high import content of production and consumption and the rigidity inherent in the undiversified economic structure, constrain their adjustment capacity as the resources cannot be easily reallocated to respond to changes in the internal or external environment.

In brief terms, the Caribbean countries are now forced to rethink every aspect of their domestic economic and social policy if they are to participate in the global economy. As Owen Arthur suggests: “The building of a post-colonial economic relationship has as its principal focus the creation of an environment to spur the diversification of the typical Caribbean economy away from its traditional mono-crop culture, to end its passive dependence on aid and colonial type protectionist trade arrangements, to end its passive incorporation as sub-species into the metropolitan economy on which it depended, and to create a basis for its sustainable development by bringing to the fore new mechanisms for domestic development and new modalities for cooperation with its international partners, that can play positive transforming roles in strategic areas, such as human resource development and the creation of dynamic private sector economies”.
Development Options

Perhaps the most significant impact of globalization on Caribbean development is the destruction of the consensus that has guided policy making since the end of the Second World War and particularly during the 1960s. Nowhere is this more evident than in the vigorous debates that have been taking place recently among Caribbean policy makers, academics and governments. Three schools of policy recommendations are identifiable. The first school represented by Caribbean technocrats argues for an intensification of Caribbean Integration. In a recent communiqué issued by the CARICOM Heads of Government at the July 2008 meeting, the heads reaffirmed the view “that the regional integration process remains the only viable option for a community of small developing states in the current global economic dispensation”. They further declared that the regional integration strategy for Caribbean development was the best policy direction to ensure “that our citizens live in a peaceful and safe environment, that they enjoy improved standard of living and quality of life and that their rights are protected”. The centre-piece of the renewed commitment to regional integration is the CARICOM Single Market and Single Economy. The CSME is justified as a response to “globalization and liberalization” which require “the attainment of international competitiveness.” This is to be achieved by means of a market-led integrated production, facilitated by “the unrestricted movement of capital, labour
and technology” and “a fully integrated and liberalized internal market”. In 2007, the CARICOM leaders went further and approved “a single development vision” to create a platform for internationally competitive export to the global market and to pursue functional co-operation to exploit institutional and resource synergies among the countries.

The second school of policy option centred on the notion of “strategic global repositioning” defined as a “process” of repositioning a country in the global economy and world affairs by implementing a strategic medium to long-term plan formulated from continuous dialogue of the public service, private sector, academic community and the social sector. It involves pro-active structural and institutional transformation (not adjustment) focussed on improvement and diversification of exports and international economic and political relations. Broadly speaking the strategy was aimed at an accommodation with globalization in order to realise the opportunities that globalization offered. To achieve strategic global repositioning, its advocates proposed a series of internal and external measures including abandoning the traditional mindset, diversifying exports, adjusting proactively, improving human resources, supplementing the skills pool with overseas nationals, developing strategic corporate alliances, creating a business facilitating environment, improving physical infrastructure, modernising international marketing, garnering capital technology and skills.
In addition the concept called for a dynamic role for the private sector and envisaged an important redefinition of the capacity and purpose of the Caribbean state with a view to making it more effective and bringing it in line with the good governance prescriptions of the Washington Consensus.

The third element of the debate was drawn mostly from the external world especially from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank which explored the policy options of smallness and vulnerability of Commonwealth Caribbean countries. The policy options were outlined in 2005 by two World Bank studies entitled “A Time to Choose: Caribbean Development in the Twenty First Century” and “Towards a New Agenda for Growth”. The World Bank studies suggested that the Caribbean economy was “one of under-fulfilled potential and concern for the sustainability of past accomplishments”. It urged that there were formidable challenges ahead for the Caribbean and suggested a wide ranging series of recommendations to address these challenges. The studies saw no future for agriculture for export and only limited future for industry. Economic growth, the studies argue, depended on competitiveness which for the Caribbean meant services, especially information and communication technology enabled products and services, off-shore education, and niche education.
It strongly recommended a pro-active approach to Caribbean development including greater integration within the Caribbean region “an orderly dismantling of preferences in return for increased financial and technical support”, improving the investment climate, making the public sector more cost effective and improving the quality and effectiveness of human resources.

It is evident from the cursory review of the debate surrounding Caribbean development that there is agreement that globalization has had and will continue to have a profound impact on the Caribbean’s future. It is also clear that the policy options being proposed demand that Caribbean development must respond to a global environment that has fundamentally changed. These debates, however, are not merely theoretical as they are now influencing the direction that governments are expected to take in their domestic and international economic relations. The contentious debates taking place about the desirability of signing a new Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) brings into sharp focus the uncertainty and lack of consensus surrounding the future of the Caribbean in the new environment.

In 2007 CARIFORUM countries (CARICOM and the Dominican Republic) completed negotiation for an economic partnership agreement (EPA) which would govern trade relations between the two groups of partners. The distinguishing provision of this agreement was the ending of preferential trade agreement and its
replacement by reciprocity. The agreement has, however, not been accepted by
some governments and has provoked a wide ranging critique by those who argue
that the EPA in its present form will undermine the prospects for Caribbean
development in the future. At the centre of this dispute is the place of the
Caribbean countries within the global economy and particularly how best to
promote Caribbean development through participation in the global system.
Proponents of the EPA drawn primarily from the school of strategic global
repositioning argue that the agreement promotes Caribbean development:

1. Its scope is unprecedented in an agreement between developed and
developing countries.
2. It is a trade agreement supported by development assistance.
3. Its objectives go beyond the expansion of trade to specifically target
sustainable economic development, the progressive integration of
CARIFORUM countries into the world economy and the elimination of
poverty.
4. Its unique combination of trade and development measures can become a
model for agreements between developed and developing countries.

In summary “CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement can be used by the
CARIFORUM countries to strengthen and accelerate their development”.
This is related to the provisions for market access which in turn will attract foreign and domestic investment. It will also allow for a manageable pace of import liberalisation with complementary provisions for development assistance to support the adjustment process and the strengthening of institutional capacity. “The EPA constitutes a new way to mediate the engagement with the global economy and the success of this endeavour will involve new approaches which in turn require new ideas. New ideas and new policies which can achieve transformation and economic development begin with a change of mind”.

In a spirited attack on the EPA entitled Caribbean Integration and Global Europe-Implications of the EPA for the CSME, Professor Girvan argues that the CSME as the project of regional integration for engagement with globalization has been superseded by the CARIFORUM / EU Partnership Agreement. It is suggested that the EPA provides for a scheme of regional integration in which Caribbean states are incorporated into a European economic zone, with free movement of goods, services and capital and with common policies and regulatory regimes in these areas, as well as in competition, intellectual property and public procurement. It was speculated that implementation of the EPA would probably lead to the eventual abandonment of the CSME project. In short the EPA “forecloses the CSME strategy of consolidating a regional economic space as a platform for
developing internationally competitive production to engage with the world economy.

Far from serving as a model that should be emulated “the EPA model is one of asymmetrical neo-liberal integration in which differences among countries in economic power and levels of development are largely ignored and trade and investment liberalization by itself is assumed to be sufficient to deliver development”. Girvan sided with those critics on the model that argues that for development to take place liberalization must be synchronised with the development of local productive capabilities, must be accompanied by targeted resource transfers to support such development, must address the non-tariff barriers in European markets that have constrained export expansion in the past and must leave sufficient policy space for governments to foster new activities and local enterprises. None of these is present in the EPA.

**Prospects for Caribbean Development**

The sharp differences in evaluation of the EPA as an instrument that would enable Caribbean countries to respond to globalisation constitute a formidable challenge to governments in charting their future in the new environment.
How the Caribbean reconciles its altered status in the changed global environment to promote development that would satisfy the needs of its people for improved standards of living, cultural integrity, support for local initiatives and local autonomy will not be settled in the short run. This is to be expected during the current global revolutionary process that is taking citizens out of the comfort zone of their traditional and historical patterns of economic and socio-political development – a comfort zone that is being seriously eroded on an almost daily basis by a globalisation process that demands both seemingly radical change and urgent remedial action.

It is in the context of this development that Heads of Government have been meeting over the years and more recently with unprecedented but welcome regularity and urgency to discuss such crisis-oriented issues as Climate Change, Security, Energy and Rising Food Prices. At their Special Meeting in Guyana in December 2007\(^9\) for example, to discuss Poverty and the Rising Cost of Living in Member States with a view to “finding solutions, at both the national and regional levels, to the critical issue of poverty and the rising cost of living”, they took note of the several factors which were impacting negatively on the issue, many of which were outside of the control of the Community.
The factors include: "persistently high and rising prices in the global economy... (that) are in turn fuelled by unprecedented high and rising oil prices; climate change which ... disrupted food supplies from the main producer countries that have suffered droughts and other natural disasters; increasing demand by some emerging economies as a result of massive urbanisation and industrialisation; the shift in agricultural production from food to bio-fuels; increased cost in ocean freight resulting from high oil prices; and more recently the sharp depreciation of the US Dollar."

Just a few months earlier, in September 2007, CARICOM Heads of Government met in a Special Session to address the issue of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)¹⁰ which was accounting for, among other detrimental factors, over 50% of the deaths in “the poorer countries which carried a double burden of disease”. This response by the Heads underscores a number of important considerations that are relevant to the regional integration process. In the Nassau Declaration of 2001¹¹, there was the clear recognition that the health of the region was the wealth of the region and that both national and regional policies should be guided by this principle.
It was in fact the formalisation of an ongoing process within the Community's health sectors. The September Summit, however, in the face of rapidly changing global developments and their regional repercussions, significantly raised the level of focus and attention which should be placed on the imperative to stop the spread of NCDs. The demand for radical solutions and urgent remedial action went beyond the traditional call for increased national attention and was virtually elevated to the level of a collective regional responsibility. And within this was the significant and welcome development which recognized and fully accepted that the integration process, in respect of addressing the issue of NCDs as with other issues of a regional nature, would be even better served when undertaken within the context of regional public/private partnership programmes.

These Special Summits are not therefore ad hoc responses to emerging crises. They are made necessary by the rapid changes that are taking place within the international environment and which, fuelled by the swiftness of information and technology changes and their effects on global action and interaction, have created the imperative for equally swift and timely responses. The challenge which all this poses is how to implement the various courses of action that are demanded in response to the impact of these quite revolutionary changes. How to effect not only swift remedial responses, but also how to implement courses of action that will serve to strengthen and advance the regional integration process.
The conclusions of the 13th Special Meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government which was held in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2008 have provided us with some answers. Special attention was focused on a number of significant issues requiring regional responses including the issue of Governance, particularly with respect to decision making; operationalisation of the CARICOM Development Fund; Crime and Security, and how to build on the legacy of Cricket World Cup from the perspective of enhancing Regional Security; regional coordination with respect to Drug Trafficking; Deportees, thus its impact on national and regional development; review and rationalisation of Regional Institutions and Organisations. The significance of all this, and it bears repetition, is that even as the regional integration process is being buffeted by the external winds of change, efforts are being concentrated on strengthening the process to withstand these pressures. Making the Community stronger and more viable, improving its structures at all levels and creating an environment for not only citizens’ participation but also their better appreciation of the imperative for regional integration represent the necessary actions for re-energising the integration process.

In pursuance of this goal, the CARICOM Heads of Government had established a Prime Ministerial Expert Group on Governance (PMEGG) which produced a number of useful recommendations. Subsequently, a Technical Work Group on
Governance (TWG) sought to provide further clarification on a number of issues raised in the PMEgg Report\textsuperscript{13}, including the implications of the establishment of a CARICOM Commission, supported by the introduction of a system of Community Law, as an instrument for facilitating decision making at the community level and also for ensuring the speedy implementation of such decisions.

Needless to say, the effort to arrive at a satisfactory solution to regional governance has been bedevilled by a division between those in the community who seek to defend individual national sovereignty and those who believe that an effective system of regional governance would imply some cession of sovereignty. Clearly therefore the challenge lies in finding an accommodation between an uncompromising defence of sovereignty and conceding a measure of supranationality.

In an effort to advance the debate on regional governance, some analysts have argued in favour of the concept of a ‘variable geometry of integration’; similar to the policy pursued by the European Union, whereby those countries within the Caribbean Community wishing to pursue deeper forms of integration than the others would be allowed to do so, subject to two provisos, namely, that such deeper forms of integration should not contravene the objectives of the community and,
moreover, should not preclude other members of the community wishing to join such deeper forms of integration from doing so.

In terms of economic strategy, the reality is that despite the small size of the individual member states, the region, viewed as a collective, disposes of a significant range of resources, including petroleum and natural gas, gold, diamonds, vast agricultural resources, significant tourism infrastructure and not insignificant human resources. For this reason some policy makers have urged the intensification of efforts to increase production integration in the region both in terms of cross-border sectoral aggregation and inter-sectoral integration in an effort to optimise the development potential of the region.

Moreover, within the framework of increased production integration, some academics have advocated the establishment within the region of ‘growth triangles’, similar to those established within Asia, most notably the Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore (IMS) growth triangle which integrates economic activities across Batam Island in the Riau Peninsula of Indonesia, Johor Province in Malaysia and Singapore. Part of the rationale for such a strategy is that Singapore, with limited land area, but with significant foreign exchange measures (amounting to over US$70 billion at the time the IMS was launched) was interested in establishing an external investment platform based on the utilisation
of its foreign reserves and technological know-how in combination with the land area in Johor Province and an abundant labour supply in Indonesia.

In the case of the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, with its significant foreign reserves derived from petroleum and natural gas, is seen as being in a similar position to Singapore at the time of the launch of the IMS Triangle. In this context, some analysts have argued that within the framework of efforts aimed at promoting production integration in the Caribbean, two growth triangles may be envisaged. The first would involve the resource-rich countries of the region, such as Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname, in combination with the financial resources of Trinidad and Tobago, to promote an increasingly sophisticated service sector capable of competing in the global economy. In both cases, Trinidad and Tobago is seen as the common denominator since it has the potential to serve as a pivot, or what some analysts have termed a ‘growth catalyst’, in the context of the proposed growth triangles.

While regional economic integration has been the cornerstone of the region’s development strategy, the Community has also sought to promote a pattern of concentric relations at the wider Caribbean level, within the Latin America system, at the hemispheric level and within the global system. For example, the Community has concluded trade agreements with Cuba and the Dominican
Republic. It has also established trading and other economic arrangements with Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela. As mentioned earlier, at the wider hemispheric level it has significant aid and trade agreements with Canada and the US and is an active participant in the Organisation of American States (OAS). Finally, the Caribbean has actively participated in the work of the United Nations, which it sees as an important multilateral instrument for promoting the development of small countries and also as a forum for maximising their diplomatic influence.

The Caribbean is, of course, keenly aware of the significant geostrategic shifts that are taking place at the global level. China, for example, has amassed significant foreign reserves amounting to some US$1.5 trillion at the end of 2007 and has become, together with the European Union and Japan, a major investor in the US economy. China also enjoys a significant trade surplus with the US. It is projected that by 2050, China with a GDP of US$22 trillion, will surpass the US as the largest economy in the world. For this reason, writers such as Joshua Ramo\textsuperscript{14} have characterised China as an ‘asymmetric superpower’ which will achieve global dominance, not by military means but by economic influence and diplomacy.
Similarly, with a population in excess of 1 billion, India has also emerged as an economic force to be reckoned with based on its increased industrial capacity and its burgeoning information technology sector, most closely associated with cities such as Bangalore. It is expected that by the middle of the present century, India will rank as the third largest economy in the world, behind China and the US.

Viewed from a strategic perspective, the Caribbean is gradually becoming aware of the implications of the changes for its own long term development prospects. In fact, both China and India have shown an interest in the Caribbean. The former has done so largely because of its concern over the diplomatic recognition of Taiwan by a number of members of the Community, notably Belize, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. China has built a number of cricket stadiums in the region in an effort to extend its diplomatic influence.

For its part, India’s interest in the region is dictated by the presence of large East Indian communities in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, which originated with the system of indentured labour instituted by the British in the nineteenth century in an effort to provide replacement labour for the plantations following the emancipation of African slaves towards the middle of the century.
Like China, India built a new cricket stadium in Guyana for the 2007 Cricket World Cup Competition. It also maintains an extensive diplomatic presence in the region.

Given these realities, without abandoning its traditional alliances with North America and Europe, the Caribbean will need to explore options for diversifying its trade and production structures to capitalise on the trade and investment opportunities that might arise in relation to China and India. The expansion of such linkages could also provide opportunities for stimulating new development possibilities based on the integration of the production structure of the member states of the Community.

Reference must be made to the "Diaspora’s Outreach" as a significant contributor to a more cohesive regionalism and the role which the Caribbean can play in deepening and strengthening the process of regional integration. It was in June 2007 that a major milestone was recorded in the history of the Caribbean Community in its measured progress towards a state of genuine integration. There was held, in various cities of the US, a coming together of CARICOM nationals and descendants of nationals in a collective effort at making a definitive and sustainable contribution towards the integration of the Caribbean Community.
Broadly described as the “Conference on the Caribbean – A 20/20 Vision”\textsuperscript{15}, the region’s Diaspora produced, through a consultative process lasting several months, a series of thought-provoking ideas and recommendations that integrally involved them through various contributions other than – or in addition to – the system of remittances which continues to make such a significant contribution to the region’s several poverty amelioration programmes.

A CIDA study\textsuperscript{16}, commissioned in 2007, has recorded that the Caribbean Community has the highest per capita rate of emigration in the world. Many of these migrants are well educated. Indeed, the study notes that an average 73\% of college/university graduates have left the region since the sixties and that these figures are even higher in respect of Guyana, Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. These persons comprise the Diaspora, in addition to the hordes of skilled and semi-skilled workers who also have left the region in search of a better life elsewhere. No developing country or region can sustain such losses and still maintain a strong foundation for its development. More to the point, no developing country or region can successfully meet the challenges of development unless it seriously addresses the relationship of its Diaspora to its development process.
Much has been said about the value of remittances from the Diaspora to a country’s development. Here is not the place to dilate on the arguments for and against this, other than to concede that these cross-border economic transfers contribute significantly to the survival and welfare of the recipients in their home states. The jury is still out however, on whether remittances make any significant contribution to the national/regional development process, particularly when viewed in the context of the social and economic impact of the ‘brain drain’ on that very development process. Dr. Laura Ritchie Dawson, in her penetrating analysis of this issue, entitled: “Brain Drain, Brain Circulation, Remittances and Development: Prospects for the Caribbean” notes that, “the emigration experiences of China, India, Mexico, Armenia, the Philippines and elsewhere tell a compelling story of how migration can contribute to development for some countries, but produce little in the way of sustainable development for others”.

In treating with the Diaspora as an essential element of development – and this was the fundamental premise of the “Conference on the Caribbean – A 20/20 Vision” – one needs to go much beyond the value of remittances and recognise the Diaspora as a community itself with a clear and positive umbilical linkage to the Caribbean Community.
Dr. Kenrick Hunte, in his article entitled: "US/CARICOM: Building Partnerships and Expanding Outreach"\textsuperscript{18}, calls for a more systematic involvement of the Diaspora and recommends the creation of a Caribbean Diaspora Foundation that would be responsible for implementing a number of agreed recommendations involving skills and talents of the Diaspora.

In the continuing thrust for a cohesive Caribbean Community, no area has remained unexplored. In addressing the various challenges and in taking advantage of the many opportunities therein created, the Leaders of the Caribbean Community have recognised as well the need to build partnerships in order to do so effectively – partnerships which include: transferred sovereignty from national governments in addressing some issues; arrangements with the region's private sector and private sector organisations; the Community's Diaspora; the region's institutions of higher learning; and the informed inputs of such Community institutions as the Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians and the NGOs that can give life and meaning to the Charter of Civil Society.
Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that the small states of the Caribbean have sought to respond creatively to the challenges facing them by embracing a strategy of regional integration while at the same time pursuing a pattern of concentric diplomacy aimed at expanding their trade and economic links with other countries or groups of countries in the wider international system. Over the years the region has demonstrated a capacity to survive in the face of difficult challenges. I am confident therefore, that the Caribbean will continue to prosper and also serve as an important catalyst for change in both the hemispheric system and the larger global community. His will to succeed was demonstrated to the rest of the world at the recently concluded Beijing Olympics by Caribbean athletes, notably those who represented Jamaica. It is this same will and determination, this extraordinary energy that will enable the small states of the region to confidently confront the challenges of “Caribbean Development and Globalisation.”

Thank you.

King’s House
Jamaica W.I.
September 4, 2008
ENDNOTES


2Ibid, p. 15

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6Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States: Towards a New Agenda for Growth, World Bank, April 7, 2005

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10 Communique Issued at the Conclusion of the Regional Summit of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 15 September, 2007, www.caricom.org


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